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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/14/2012

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SUBJECT: HOLY SEE EFFORTS TO COMBAT ANTI-SEMITISM IN EUROPE

REF: A) VATICAN 3634 B) 01 VATICAN 839

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR JIM NICHOLSON, REASONS: E.O. 12958 1.5 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

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1. (C) POPE JOHN PAUL II HAS SPOKEN OUT FORCEFULLY AND CONSISTENTLY AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM IN EUROPE AND AGAINST SPECIFIC ANTI-SEMITIC ACTS. HE ACKNOWLEDGES THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY TO COMBAT ANTI-SEMITISM -- IN PART BASED ON THE CHURCH'S SELF-ACKNOWLEDGED HISTORICAL & SIN8 OF PROMOTING ANTI-JUDAISM (RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION) IN EUROPE. THROUGHOUT HIS PONTIFICATE, THE POPE HAS SOUGHT TO TURN THIS AWARENESS OF PAST ERRORS INTO A RESOLVE TO OVERCOME THIS HISTORICAL ANTI-JUDAISM AND TO COMBAT EUROPEAN ANTI-SEMITISM (ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION). TO THIS END, THE POPE HAS RADICALLY TRANSFORMED THE HOLY SEE'S RELATIONS WITH JEWS, REDEFINING THE JEWISH RELIGION AS INTRINSIC TO CHRISTIANITY AND PART OF A COMMON HERITAGE, WHILE ACTIVELY DEEPENING THE CHURCH'S DIALOGUE WITH JEWS. BUILDING ON THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL'S REAPPRAISAL OF CATHOLICISM'S RELATIONSHIP TO JUDAISM, THE HOLY SEE HAS TAKEN SYSTEMIC MEASURES TO ADDRESS ITS ROLE IN HISTORICAL ANTI-SEMITISM AND TO CHANGE ITS PRACTICE. ASIDE FROM PUBLIC AND DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS, IT ACTIVELY PROMOTES AN AWARENESS OF THE ERROR OF ANTI-JUDAISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM IN ITS MANY CATHOLIC EDUCATION PROGRAMS. THESE TENETS ARE ALSO PROMOTED BY BISHOPS' CONFERENCES IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES AND ARE PREACHED REGULARLY THROUGHOUT THE CONTINENT. CATHOLIC LAY ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE SANT'EGIDIO COMMUNITY ENGAGE IN FREQUENT DIALOGUE AND EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH, WITH THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE HOLY SEE.
END SUMMARY.

JP11: AN ACTIVIST AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM

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2. (U) JOHN PAUL II'S EFFORTS TO COMBAT ANTI-SEMITISM STEM IN PART FROM HIS PERSONAL EXPERIENCES GROWING UP IN A TOWN WITH A LARGE JEWISH POPULATION, DEFENDING JEWISH FRIENDS FROM ANTI-SEMITIC ATTACKS, AND WITNESSING HIS FELLOW COUNTRYMEN AND WOMEN BEING SHIPPED TO NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMPS. FROM THE POPE'S EARLY STUDIES HE CAME TO THE VIEW THAT ANTI-SEMITES WERE ANTI-CHRISTIAN. SUBSEQUENTLY, HE DEVELOPED A STRONG PERSONAL CONVICTION OF THE INHERENT DIGNITY OF ALL HUMAN BEINGS; AND THREATS TO THIS DIGNITY HAVE ALMOST BECOME PERSONAL "CAUSES" FOR THIS POPE. THE POPE HAS ASSERTED THAT THE CHURCH MUST ATONE FOR THE HISTORICAL EXISTENCE OF ANTI-JUDAISM IN CHRISTIAN EUROPE THAT AT LEAST IN PART CREATED A FOUNDATION FOR THE RACIAL ANTI-SEMITISM OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

3. (U) IT IS THEREFORE NO COINCIDENCE THAT UNDER JOHN PAUL II THE VATICAN HAS UNDERTAKEN NUMEROUS SYMBOLIC AND PRACTICAL STEPS TO BUILD ON VATICAN II REFORMS AND REACH OUT TO JEWS -- MOST DRAMATICALLY WHEN THE POPE VISITED ROME'S SYNAGOGUE IN 1986, AND JERUSALEM'S WAILING WALL IN 2000. IN FACT, WHEN POPE JOHN PAUL II STEPPED INTO ROME'S SYNAGOGUE IN APRIL 1986, HE WAS THE FIRST POPE IN 1,900 YEARS TO TAKE THAT STEP. THROUGHOUT HIS PONTIFICATE, HE HAS MERGED SUCH DRAMATIC, SYMBOLIC STEPS, SUCH AS HIS VISIT TO AUSCHWITZ IN POLAND, WITH A NEW CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO CATHOLIC-JEWISH RELATIONS EMBODIED IN AN ARRAY OF STATEMENTS AND EXHORTATIONS. THESE STATEMENTS, WHICH BEGAN WITH THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL'S NOSTRA AETATE IN 1965 AND INCLUDE "WE REMEMBER: A REFLECTION ON THE SHOAH," HAVE EMPHASIZED THE CHURCH'S REJECTION OF ALL FORMS OF PERSECUTION, ITS SHARED SPIRITUAL HERITAGE WITH JUDAISM, AND A RECOGNITION OF AND REPENTANCE FOR PAST ERRORS.

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WHAT THE HOLY SEE IS DOING

14. (U) THE CHURCH HAS ORGANIZED ITSELF SINCE VATICAN II TO ENGAGE IN AN OPEN DIALOGUE WITH OTHER FAITHS, INCLUDING THE ORTHODOX, BUT IN PARTICULAR, WITH THE JEWISH FAITH. REFLECTING THE POPE'S COMMITMENT, HE HAS PUT SOME OF HIS BEST PEOPLE ON THIS TASK. GERMAN CARDINAL WALTER KASPER, ONE OF THE VATICAN'S MOST OPEN AND PERCEPTIVE INTERLOCUTORS, FOR EXAMPLE, HEADS THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY, WHICH INCLUDES RESPONSIBILITY FOR DIALOGUE WITH JEWS, AND IS CHARGED WITH FOSTERING A BETTER MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF BOTH RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS. KASPER SAID OCTOBER 18, IN REFERENCE TO OPENING THE HOLOCAUST-ERA VATICAN ARCHIVES, THAT THE CHURCH SHOULD NOT BE AFRAID TO CONFRONT ITS PAST. MORE RECENTLY, ON NOVEMBER 6 HE OFFERED A THREE-POINT ACTION PLAN FOR THE ON-GOING FIGHT AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM FOCUSING ON REVISITING RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATIONAL TEXTS, INCREASING PERSONAL ENCOUNTERS WITH JEWISH PEOPLE, AND STUDYING JEWISH HISTORY.

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15. (U) BEYOND KASPER'S DIALOGUE, THE HOLY SEE IS HIGHLY ATTUNED TO ANY INCIDENT THAT MIGHT SMACK OF RESURGENT ANTI-SEMITISM. FOR EXAMPLE, THE POPE QUICKLY SENT A MESSAGE WHEN IT SEEMED JEWISH GRAVES IN ROME'S VERANO CEMETERY HAD BEEN DESECRATED EARLIER THIS YEAR (REF A). THE POPE'S LEADERSHIP IN THIS REGARD IS REFLECTED IN VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE EUROPEAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCES, WHICH HAVE EITHER ISSUED DOCUMENTS OR MADE STATEMENTS IN THE MEDIA CONDEMNING ANTI-SEMITISM GENERALLY AND SPECIFIC ANTI-SEMITIC ACTS. EUROPEAN BISHOPS CONFERENCES WILL CONTINUE TO SPEAK OUT

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AGAINST ANTI-SEMITIC ATTACKS, AS THE FRENCH BISHOPS DID WHEN SYNAGOGUES IN FRANCE WERE DESECRATED IN APRIL THIS YEAR.

16. (U) AT THE OSCE, VATICAN FOREIGN POLICY ACTIVELY SUPPORTS AND PROMOTES RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND TOLERANCE IN EUROPE. WHILE DEFENDING ITS OWN INTERESTS AND POSITION, IT EMBRACES THE CAUSES OF ALL OTHER RELIGIONS FOR MUTUAL BENEFIT. THE HOLY SEE'S REPRESENTATIVE IS WORKING WITH US TO ENSURE RELIGIOUS DISCRIMINATION OR ANTI-SEMITISM ARE CONDEMNED BY THE OSCE, AND THAT THE ORGANIZATION PUTS PRESSURE ON OFFENDING GOVERNMENTS TO AMEND LEGISLATION AND PRACTICES.

17. (U) THE RECENT ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INSTITUTE FOR INTER-RELIGIOUS STUDIES AT THE PONTIFICAL GREGORIAN UNIVERSITY AND THE OPENING OF THE LIBRARY FOR STUDIES IN JUDAISM RUN BY THE SISTERS OF SION REFLECTS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH'S CONTINUING COMMITMENT TO PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING OF NON-CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS, ESPECIALLY JUDAISM. WE EXPECT MORE CATHOLIC INSTITUTES OF HIGHER LEARNING TO ESTABLISH PROGRAMS TO STUDY JUDAISM IN THE YEARS AHEAD. EDUCATION AT ALL LEVELS WILL CONTINUE TO BE A KEY COMPONENT OF THE HOLY SEE'S EFFORTS TO COUNTER ANTI-SEMITISM. IN 1985, THE HOLY SEE RELEASED "NOTES ON THE CORRECT WAY TO PRESENT THE JEWS AND JUDAISM IN PREACHING AND CATECHESIS," A PRIMER DESIGNED TO PUT AN DEFINITIVE END TO TEACHING OF JEWISH CULPABILITY IN CHRIST'S DEATH. CENTURIES OF MISUNDERSTANDING WILL NEVERTHELESS TAKE TIME TO CORRECT, BUT THE HOLY SEE'S EDUCATIONAL EFFORTS ARE CONTRIBUTING TO THAT PROCESS.

18. (SBU) BEYOND THE VATICAN WALLS BUT WORKING CLOSELY WITH
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THEM, ROME'S SANT'EGIDIO COMMUNITY (WHICH FOCUSES ON RELIEF AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION AROUND THE WORLD) HAS MAINTAINED A TWENTY-YEAR DIALOGUE WITH JUDAISM. ON THE OCTOBER 16 ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEPORTATION OF ROME'S JEWS TO NAZI EXTERMINATION CAMPS, SANT'EGIDIO FOUNDER ANDREA RICCARDI

EMPHASIZED THAT JEWS ARE AN ESSENTIAL COMPONENT OF ROME'S IDENTITY. RICCARDI WARNED THAT "NEW WINDS OF ANTI-SEMITISM" WERE BLOWING INTO EUROPE, AND SAID IT WAS KEY TO STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE JEWS AND NEVER AGAIN TO ABANDON THEM. RICCARDI, A RESPECTED HISTORIAN, MENTIONED A NUMBER OF ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENTS THAT HAVE PEPPERED ROME'S RECENT PAST. RICCARDI ALSO REPRESENTED THE SANT'EGIDIO COMMUNITY AT A MEMORIAL EVENT AT ROME'S CITY HALL WHERE HE SPOKE ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING HISTORY IN FIGHT AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM. THE SANT'EGIDIO COMMUNITY HOSTS THIS ANNUAL COMMEMORATION AND CONDUCTS DURING THE YEAR A NUMBER OF EDUCATIONAL TRIPS FOR ITALIAN CHILDREN TO THE ROME SYNAGOGUE AND JEWISH SCHOOL, WITH THE FULL SUPPORT AND BACKING OF THE HOLY SEE ITSELF. IN ADDITION, IT CONDUCTS AN IMPRESSIVE ANNUAL INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE ENCOUNTER WITH ACTIVE HOLY SEE AND JEWISH PARTICIPATION AIMED AT FOSTERING UNDERSTANDING AND EMPHASIZING COMMON VALUES OF DIVERSE FAITHS IN THE SPIRIT OF THE POPE'S 1986 ASSISI INTER-FAITH INITIATIVE.

CURIAL VIEWS DIFFER ON STATE OF EUROPEAN ANTI-SEMITISM

19. (C) DESPITE THE REAL PROGRESS MADE OVER THE LAST FORTY YEARS IN THE VATICAN'S RELATIONS WITH JUDAISM AND THE STRONG LEADERSHIP ON THIS ISSUE OF POPE JOHN PAUL II, THE POPE'S AND
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KASPER'S ENTHUSIASM IS NOT ALWAYS REFLECTED FROM ALL PARTS OF THE CURIA. INDEED, SOME REMAIN SKEPTICAL ABOUT THE THREAT OF RESURGENT ANTI-SEMITISM, REGARDING RECENT ATTACKS PRIMARILY AS A REACTION OF DISAFFECTED MOSLEM IMMIGRANTS TO THE SITUATION IN THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES. AS ONE CONTACT ASSERTED: "WHEN ISRAEL WITHDRAWS FROM THE TERRITORIES THE ANTI-SEMITIC ATTACKS WILL GO AWAY."

110. (C) MOREOVER, ANTI-JUDAIC AND ANTI-SEMITIC SENTIMENTS HAVE NOT BEEN COMPLETELY ERADICATED FROM THE EUROPEAN MEMBERS OF THE CURIA. IN A FEW CASES, WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED EUROPEAN CURIAL OFFICIALS WHO HAVE MANIFESTED REMNANTS OF ANTI-SEMITIC SENTIMENTS. FOR EXAMPLE, AN OLDER DESK OFFICER OF FRENCH ORIGIN COMPLAINED TO POLOFF THAT THE USG'S STRONG INTEREST IN MODERN EUROPEAN ANTI-SEMITISM STEMMED FROM THE "EXCESSIVE INFLUENCE OF JEWS IN YOUR MEDIA AND GOVERNMENT." HE WENT ON TO UNDERScore THAT THE VATICAN SHARES USG CONCERNS ABOUT RESURGENT EUROPEAN ANTI-SEMITISM, BUT THAT IT WASN'T QUITE AS WORRIED AS THE USG APPEARED TO BE. HE CLAIMED THAT THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN EUROPE WAS NOW SO FULLY INTEGRATED THAT THEIR JEWISHNESS IS MORE A RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION THAN A

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SOCIAL OR CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION. ANOTHER SENIOR CURIAL REPRESENTATIVE ON ONE OCCASION TOLD A PREVIOUS AMBASSADOR THAT THE VATICAN'S LEGAL PROBLEMS STEMMING FROM THE HOLOCAUST ASSETS REPORT (REF B) WERE THE RESULT OF "JEWISH JUDGES HAVING TOO MUCH INFLUENCE."

JEWISH/ISRAELI PERSPECTIVES ON HOLY SEE EFFORTS

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11. (C) IN A NOVEMBER 13 CONVERSATION WITH THE AMBASSADOR, RICCARDO DI SEGNI, CHIEF RABBI OF ROME, PRAISED THE HOLY SEE FOR ITS ROLE IN DENYING ANTI-SEMITES A THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR THEIR PREJUDICE. HE SAID THAT THE VATICAN II REFORMS HAVE "CUT THE TREE AT ITS ROOTS -- BUT THE ROOTS ARE STILL THERE, WAITING FOR WATER." IN THAT REGARD HE BELIEVED THAT POPE

JOHN PAUL'S HIGHLY SYMBOLIC GESTURES SUCH AS THE 1986 VISIT TO THE ROME SYNAGOGUE HAD DONE MUCH TO EDUCATE THE ITALIAN AND EUROPEAN PUBLIC. REGARDING THE SCOPE OF THE ANTI-SEMITISM PROBLEM, DE SEGNI MAINTAINED THAT EACH COUNTRY HAS TO BE ANALYZED IN ITS OWN RIGHT. HE AGREED THAT MANY RECENT ANTI-SEMITIC ACTS OF VIOLENCE, PARTICULARLY THOSE IN FRANCE, RESULTED LARGELY FROM FRUSTRATIONS OF DISAFFECTED IMMIGRANT YOUTHS FROM NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST. SUCH ATTACKS, HE SAID, WERE UNKNOWN IN ITALY. THE FRENCH PHENOMENON WITH ITS MIDDLE EAST LINKS, HE BELIEVED, WAS DIFFERENT FROM THE HISTORIC ANTI-SEMITISM THAT STILL EXISTS IN EUROPE. CITING LOCAL SOCCER HOOLIGANS' USE OF THE WORD "JEW" AS AN EPITHET, DE SEGNI INDICATED THAT ITALIAN AUTHORITIES NEEDED TO WORK HARDER BOTH TO EDUCATE THE PUBLIC AND CREATE A MORE JUST ECONOMIC ORDER, SO THAT MARGINALIZED PEOPLE DO NOT MISTAKENLY TARGET JEWS TO EXPRESS THEIR DISAFFECTION.

12. (C) OUR ISRAELI EMBASSY CONTACTS ALSO WELCOMED THE POPE'S PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO COMBATING ANTI-SEMITISM AND HIS MANY IMPORTANT SYMBOLIC ACTS DURING HIS PAPACY. THEY NOTED THAT THE COMMITMENT TO COMBAT ANTI-SEMITISM WAS INCORPORATED IN THE "FUNDAMENTAL ACT" AGREEMENT THAT FORMED THE BASIS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE HOLY SEE AND ISRAEL, AND WAS THUS BOTH A LEGAL AND MORAL COMMITMENT FOR THE HOLY SEE. THE
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ISRAELI EMBASSY HAS IN RECENT TIMES FOUND THE HOLY SEE SLOWER TO RAISE ITS VOICE IN RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC ACTS AND RELUCTANT TO REPEAT ITS CONDEMNATIONS OF ANTI-SEMITISM OUT OF FEAR THAT SUCH STATEMENTS WOULD BE INTERPRETED IN THE ARAB WORLD AS SUPPORT FOR THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. THE ISRAELI EMBASSY CONTINUES TO EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING THESE ISSUES SEPARATE, AND RECENTLY FOUND SUPPORT FROM CARDINAL ROGER ETCHEGARAY, WHO PUBLICLY STATED THAT CRITICISM OF ISRAELI POLICIES MUST NEVER SLIP INTO REDUCED VIGILANCE AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM. THE EMBASSY, FOR ITS PART, IS WORKING WITH THE HOLY SEE TO DEVELOP EDUCATIONAL AND EXCHANGE PROGRAMS AND TO SUPPORT THE STUDY OF JUDAISM AT CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES. DESPITE THESE EFFORTS, ISRAEL'S RELATIONS WITH THE HOLY SEE ARE CURRENTLY COOL AS A RESULT OF THE GOVERNMENT'S HARD-LINE TACTICS IN THE WEST BANK AND GAZA. FROM THE CURIA'S PERSPECTIVE, THE SPIRAL OF VIOLENCE IN ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND THE RESULTANT EXODUS OF THE REGION'S CHRISTIANS, IS A MATTER OF PRIMARY CONCERN AND A SUBJECT OF REPEATED PAPAL INTERVENTIONS.

COMMENT

13. (SBU) WE CAN CONTINUE TO COUNT ON THE HOLY SEE -- AND THIS POPE IN PARTICULAR -- TO BE A VITAL PARTNER IN COMBATING ANTI-SEMITISM IN EUROPE TODAY. DESPITE OCCASIONAL DIFFICULTIES AND LINGERING DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND JUDAISM, WE CAN CONTINUE TO COUNT ON THE HOLY SEE TO SPEAK OUT, TEACH, PROVIDE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE,
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AND KEEP PRESSURE ON EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS TO COUNTER SIGNS OF RESURGENT ANTI-SEMITISM. FOR EXAMPLE, THE HOLY SEE IS MORE THAN WILLING TO USE BOTH ITS VOICE AND VOTE ON SUCH MORAL ISSUES AS ANTI-SEMITISM AT EUROPEAN ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE OSCE. POST WILL CONTINUE TO WORK WITH THE HOLY SEE TO HIGHLIGHT THE NEED FOR VIGILANCE AGAINST RESURGENT ANTI-SEMITISM, NO MATTER WHAT ITS ORIGIN. LAST WEEK, FOR EXAMPLE, THE AMBASSADOR BEGAN COORDINATING WITH HOLY SEE COM'S TO ENSURE THAT THE ANTI-SEMITISM THEME WILL BE PART OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS' ANNUAL GREETING TO THE POPE, WHICH SHAPES THE POPE'S ANNUAL DIPLOMATIC CORPS ADDRESS. IN ADDITION, THE AMBASSADOR MEETS REGULARLY WITH ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE PRESIDENT ABRAHAM FOXMAN AND RELEVANT VATICAN OFFICIALS TO KEEP THIS ISSUE IN THE FOREFRONT OF OUR AGENDA AND TO HIGHLIGHT U.S. CONCERNS. LATER THIS MONTH, THE AMBASSADOR WILL BE RECEIVING THE "NOSTRA AETATE" AWARD IN NEW YORK FROM THE CENTER FOR JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS AT SACRED HEART UNIVERSITY, REFLECTING HIS COMMITMENT TO COMBATING ANTI-SEMITISM. WE ALSO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT AND ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN SANT EGIDIO'S INTERFAITH ACTIVITIES AIMED AT DEEPENING THE CATHOLIC-JEWISH DIALOGUE.

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